

CODE OF WARTIME PRACTICES

Edition of December 1, 1943

OSD Declassification/Release Instructions on File

This third revision of the Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press is based on experience of the Office of Censorship and of the Press since the original edition was issued on January 15, 1942.

All requests of the Code apply to advertising matter, news letters, corporation and business reports, letters to the editor, personal and society news (which often discloses military or diplomatic movements or identity restricted herein), and commentators and columnists who deal both with news and circulated reports.

The Code does not limit speculation or opinion. But use of any device of "speculation" to disclose restricted information presents a hazard to voluntary censorship.

The basic facts of voluntary press censorship remain unchanged. The first of these facts is that the outcome of the war is a matter of vital personal concern to the future of every American citizen. The second is that the security of our armed forces and even of our homes and our liberties will be weakened in greater or less degree by every disclosure of information which will help the enemy.

If every member of every news staff and contributing writer will keep these two facts constantly in mind, and then will follow the dictates of common sense, he will be able to answer for himself many of the questions which might otherwise trouble him. In other words, a maximum of accomplishment will be attained if editors will ask themselves with respect to any given detail, "Is this information I would like to have if I were the enemy?" and then act accordingly.

The result of such a process will hardly represent "Business as usual" on the news desks of the country. On the contrary, it will mean some sacrifice of the journalistic enterprise of ordinary times. But it will not mean a news or editorial black-out. It is the hope and expectation of the Office of Censorship that the columns of American publications will remain the freest in the world, and will tell the story of our national successes and shortcomings accurately and in much detail.

The highly gratifying response of the press proves that it understands the need for temporary sacrifice, and is prepared to make that sacrifice in the spirit of the President's assurance that such curtailment as may be necessary will be administered "in harmony with the best interests of our free institutions."

Below is a summary covering specific problems. Obviously it is impossible to anticipate every conceivable contingency. The Office of Censorship will make special requests from time to time covering individual situations in order to round out this outline of publications' practices which the Government feels are desirable for the effective prosecution of the war, and the security of American citizens.

Special attention is directed to the fact that all of the requests in the summary are modified by a proviso that the information listed may properly be published when authorized by appropriate authority. News on all of these subjects will become available from Government sources; but in war, timeliness is an important factor, and the Government unquestionably is in the best

position to decide when disclosure is timely.

The specific information which newspapers, magazines, and all other media of publication are asked not to publish except when such information is made available for publication by appropriate authority, or is specifically cleared by the Office of Censorship, falls into the following classes:

ARMED FORCES

The general character and movements of United States Army, Navy or Marine Corps units, within or without the continental limits of the United States - their location, identity, or exact composition, equipment, or strength; destination, routes, and schedules; assembly for embarkation, prospective embarkation, or actual embarkation. Any such information regarding the troops of friendly nations on American soil.

Note: The request as regards "location" and "general character" does not apply to troops in training camps in continental United States, nor to units assigned to domestic police duty.

Special note on unit identification. - Except for troops in training camps in the United States, members of the armed forces should not be identified with military or naval units or ships. Such unit identifications are of great value to the enemy, and should be eliminated from servicemen's letters, interviews, addresses, and similar news.

Names of servicemen outside the United States may be published after official announcement of the arrival of United States forces in such areas, without any unit or ship identification. Names of naval personnel should not be linked with their ships unless the ship has been announced lost or damaged by the Navy.

Possible future military operations should not be revealed by identifying an individual or group known for a specialized activity.

SHIP MOVEMENTS, CARGOES, ETC.

The identity, location and movements of United States naval or merchant vessels, of neutral vessels, or vessels of nations opposing the Axis powers in any waters; the port and time of arrival or prospective arrival of such vessels, or the port from which they leave; the nature of cargoes of such vessels; the identity or location of enemy naval or merchant vessels in any waters; the identity, assembly, or movements of transports or convoys; the existence of mine fields or other harbor defenses; secret orders or other secret instructions regarding lights, buoys, and other guides to navigators; the number, size, character, and location of ships in construction, or advance information as to the date of launchings or commissionings; the physical set-up or technical details of shipyards.

Note. - This has no reference to the movement of merchant vessels on the Great Lakes or other sheltered inland waterways, unless specific instances require special ruling.

Movements of diplomatic exchange ships under direction of the State Department.

SHIP SINKINGS, DAMAGE BY ENEMY ATTACKS, ETC.

Information about the sinking or damaging from war causes of war or merchant vessels in any waters.

Note. - The appropriate authority for results of United States naval action against enemy vessels in or near American waters is the commanding officer of the district in which the action occurs, or the Naval Office of Public Relations, Washington.

Information about damage to military objectives, including docks, railroads, air fields, or public utilities or industrial plants engaged in war work, through enemy land or sea attacks on continental United States or possessions.

Note. - In reporting such attacks, counter-measures or plans of defense should not be disclosed, except through appropriate military authorities.

The appropriate authority for information about damages from enemy attacks to military objectives on land within continental United States or possessions is the commanding office in the zone of combat, or the Army Bureau of Public Relations, Washington. (For the Hawaiian Islands, the Navy.)

ATTACKS BY AIR

To the end that any air attack on continental United States may be reported in an orderly fashion, consistent with the highest requirements of national security, the following course of action before, during, and after an air raid is suggested:

Before a raid. - It is desirable that no warning or report of an impending raid be published except as given out by designated representatives of the Army Defense Command.

Note. - It is suggested that newspapers write in advance to the appropriate defense commander to ascertain the location of the designated representatives of the Defense Command in their area.

During a raid. - It is requested that news dispatches transmitted or published at the beginning of a raid, prior to official announcement, be confined to the following: (1) The fact that a raid has begun, without estimating a number of planes; (2) The fact that some bombs have been dropped, if fully established, but without effort to estimate the number; (3) The bare fact that antiaircraft guns have gone into action.

Thereafter, until the raid is ended and the all-clear sounded, it is requested that nothing be transmitted or published except communiqués which will become available promptly and periodically from the designated representatives of the Army Defense Command.

After a raid. - There is no objection to publication of general descriptions of the action after the all-clear is given, provided such

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accounts do not (1) play up horror or sensationalism; (2) deal with or refer to unconfirmed versions or reports; (3) contain any estimate of the number of planes involved or the number of bombs dropped except as given in communications; (4) make any reference to damage of military objectives, such as fortifications, docks, railroads, ships, airfields, public utilities, or industrial plants engaged in war work; (5) make any mention of the exact routes taken by enemy planes; (6) describe counter-measures of defense, such as troop mobilization or movements, or the number or location of antiaircraft guns or searchlights in action, except as officially announced.

It is requested that no photographs showing damage or combat action be published or transmitted except upon clearance by military authorities.

Nothing in this request is intended to prevent or curtail constructive reporting of such matters as feats of heroism, incidents of personal courage, or response to duty by the military or by civilian defense workers.

ACCREDITED MILITARY AND NAVAL CORRESPONDENTS

No provisions in this Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press modify obligations assumed by accredited correspondents who accompany Army or Navy forces or are given special accrediting by the War or Navy Department to visit restricted areas in the United States.

These commitments, under War and Navy Department practice, pledge such correspondents to submit to censorship anything they write in zones of combat or restriction, or what they may write at a later date as result of their observation in these zones. The military department concerned is the censorship agency for all such material.

In case of a protracted enemy attack on the continental United States necessitating military declaration of a combat zone, censorship within such an area would of necessity be by military authority. After closing of news gathering for such a zone will be as in any other combat area. In the case of such an attack and declaration of a military zone of combat, the requests in this Code remain applicable to press operations outside the declared area.

PLANES

Disposition, movements, missions, new characteristics, or strength of military air units of the United States or the United Nations; military activities of commercial air lines or the Civil Air Patrol.

Information concerning new military aircraft and related items of equipment or detailed information on performance, construction, and armament of current military aircraft or related items.

FORTIFICATIONS AND AIR INSTALLATIONS

Location and description of fortifications, coast defense emplacements, antiaircraft guns and other air defense installations, including defense installation details of public airports used for military pur-

poses; location or description of camouflaged objects; location of specially constructed bomb shelters.

Information concerning installations for military purposes outside the United States.

PRODUCTION

(See also sabotage clause)

How or secret Allied military weapons, identity and location of plants making them; designs or rate of production or consumption of any specific type of war material; formulas, processes, or experiments connected with war production.

Information on imports, exports, or government stock piles of critical or strategic materials, such as tin, natural rubber, uranium, chromium, tantalum, manganese, quinine, tungsten, platinum, and high octane gasoline.

Movement or transportation of war material.

Note. - Progress of production for general categories of war material, such as planes, tanks, guns, vehicles, and munitions may be reported; but statistical information on specific weapons, such as bombers, fighter planes, 155-mm. guns, medium tanks, etc., should be avoided without appropriate authority.

SABOTAGE

Specifications (including information on "bottlenecks") which saboteurs could use to damage military objectives. No mention of sabotage should be made except on the appropriate authority of the military agency concerned or the Department of Justice.

WEATHER

Weather forecasts or maps, other than those officially released by the Weather Bureau.

COMBAT ZONE INTERVIEWS AND LETTERS

All interviews with service men or civilians from combat zones (including accounts of escapes from foreign territory) should be submitted before publication either to the Office of Censorship or the appropriate Army or Navy public relations officer nearest at hand. The War and the Navy Departments have instructed such officers to be available for such inspection and clearance.

The dangers of uncensored interviews may be considerable, since information involving military security, which has been kept from the enemy by combat zone censors, may unwittingly get into circulation when the possessor of the information returns home. Please take no chances.

Concerning letters from combat areas, the press is reminded that these letters are censored in the field only for home consumption - they are not censored for publication. When such letters are published, take great care to edit from them all hearsay and all mention of military or naval movements or operations unless the information has been made public. The Office of Censorship should be consulted in cases of doubt in the editor's mind.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND MAPS

Photographs conveying the information specified in this summary including ports of embarkation, embarking troops, views of convoys military air fields in continental United States completed after December 7, 1941, or emergency airfields no matter when completed; harbor defenses; inland waterway locks.

All aerial photographs of locks, docks, and harbor installations, war plants, railroad yards and terminal building, public utility plants, and all airports within the continental United States. On all aerial photos, care should be exercised to suppress landmarks of potential aid to enemy aircraft.

Care should be exercised in publishing photos of service men to prevent disclosure of military or naval units outside the country through insignia.

Maps disclosing the location of military depots of any kind, such as air, quartermaster or ordnance depots; key production plants; arsenals; ammunition or explosive plants of any kind.

Note.- This has no reference to maps showing the general theater of war or large-scale zones of action, movements of contending forces on a large scale, or maps showing the general ebb and flow of battle lines; or maps showing locations of military camps, provided no indication is given of size or strength, or maps showing airfields, except those constructed since December 7, 1941.

Information concerning war intelligence or counterintelligence, operations, methods, or equipment of the United States, its allies, or the enemy.

Secret detection devices.

Secret United States or allied means or systems of military communication.

WAR PRISONERS, INTERNEES, CIVILIAN PRISONERS

Information as to arrival, movements, confinement, or identity of military prisoners from war zones; identity of persons arrested or interned as enemy aliens; locations or operations of alien internment camps; place of confinement of civilians convicted of treason, espionage or sabotage.

Note.- The appropriate authority for information as to war prisoners or their camps is the War Department; for escaped prisoners, the War Department or the FBI; for information as to enemy aliens or their camps, or civilian prisoners described above, the Department of Justice. In any inquiry, please make certain whether the individuals involved are military prisoners of war, enemy, aliens, or resettled citizens or aliens.

WAR NEWS COMING INTO THE UNITED STATES

War information originating outside United States territory may be published if its origin is made plain.

Any dispatches and photographs sent across the United States-Canadian border, or material for publication in any other form, should contain nothing that will conflict with the censorship restrictions of the country in which the information or photos originate. In doubtful cases, consult the Office of Censorship at Washington.

GENERAL

Identification of combat casualties until made available for publication by the War or Navy Departments or the next of kin.

Secret war plans, or diplomatic negotiations or conversations which concern military operations.

Information disclosing the new location of national archives, or of public or private art treasures.

Information about the movements of the President of the United States (including advance notice of any place from which he will broadcast) or of official military or diplomatic missions of the United States or of any other nation opposing the Axis powers - routes, schedules, destination, within or without continental United States; movements of leading Army or Naval officers and staffs on official missions; movements of other individuals or units on military or diplomatic missions.

Information concerning any phase of the war effort should be made available anywhere which seems to come from doubtful authority, or to be in conflict with the general aims of these regulations, or if special restrictions requested locally or otherwise by various authorities seem unreasonable or out of harmony with this summary, it is recommended that the question be submitted at once to the Office of Censorship.

In addition, if any newspaper, magazine, or other agency or individual handling news or special articles desires clarification or advice as to what disclosures might or might not aid the enemy, the Office of Censorship will cooperate gladly. Such inquiries should be addressed to the Office of Censorship, Washington, 25, D. C. Telephone Executive 1800.

Should further additions or modifications of this summary seem feasible and desirable from time to time, the industry will be advised.

THE OFFICE OF CENSORSHIP,
HERON PRICE, Director

December 1, 1943.